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EDITORIAL

THE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE AS A PRIME MOVER IN QUARANTINE LEGISLATION

The first quarantine regulation on record in the American colonies, occasioned by the Philadelphia epidemic of yellow fever in 1699, and promulgated by William Penn in the General Assembly at Newcastle, Pennsylvania (October 4, 1700) as "an act to prevent sickly vessels coming into this government." We have seen how the first quarantine establishment of New York was located by act of the Colonial Legislature on Bedloe's Island in 1758, to be removed successively thereafter to Governor's (Hutten) Island (1796) and Staten Island (1799). The burning of the Staten Island station on September 1–2, 1858, was followed by the destruction of quarantine buildings subsequently erected on the old quarantine burial ground at Seguine's Point, on the south side of the island (*circa* 1859), and thereafter, patients suffering from smallpox and ship fevers had to be transported by open row boats to the old steamship Falcon, purchased in 1859 and used as a hospital hulk until 1870, or to Blackwell's Island and Ward's Island, ten miles away. At this time, the Staten Island buildings were completely dilapidated, occupied only by squatters, and the health officer had to live in a house rented by the State for his use. In 1864, Dr. John Swinburne was appointed health officer. He disposed of the squatters, had the docks, buildings and hospital ship repaired and sent the patients to quarantine in steam craft, hired or purchased as a substitute for the dangerous or unseaworthy rowboats, in which patients sometimes died. After

much niggling and niggardly policy on the part of the legislature, Swinburne secured in 1866–70 the erection of a permanent hospital on a made island, subsequently known as Swinburne Island, surrounded and separated from the west bank of Staten Island by a massive rip-rap wall, and a detention station on Hoffman Island. Swinburne was succeeded by J. M. Carnochan (1870–72), S. O. Vanderpoel (1873–80), W. M. Smith, W. T. Jenkins and Alvah H. Doty (1895–1911).

During the seventies, eighties and nineties, the sciences of bacteriology and immunology had made rapid strides and the whole theory of preventive medicine was undergoing change, particularly through the location of transmission by human and animal carriers. Asiatic cholera had penetrated the United States in 1832, 1835, 1848–49, 1854, 1866–67, 1873 and subsequently. In 1911, it was easily controlled by isolation of carriers. The reports of the successive health officers, from Swinburne to Doty, are preoccupied with this theme and monotonously urge improvements and repairs for the stations at Swinburne and Hoffman Islands. It is at this point that the Academy of Medicine begins to loom large as a prime mover in promoting efficient quarantine.

On November 3, 1887, at the suggestion of the then Health Commissioner, Dr. J. D. Bryant, the President of the Academy appointed Drs. C. R. Agnew, Janeway, Jacobi, Stephen Smith and R. H. Derby as a Conference Committee, to cooperate with the Health Department on all matters relating to public health and welfare. In connection with the cholera question, a preliminary survey of the sanitary deficiencies of Swinburne and Hoffman Islands by Janeway, Edson, Biggs and Prudden brought forth a request from the Mayor for a definite inspection of these stations by the Committee and a report estimating the probable cost of necessary repairs and improvements. This inspection was made on November 19, 1887. The competent report submitted,[1] signed by Biggs and Prudden, as well as by the original Committee, showed the extent to which these stations had been permitted to lapse in respect of sanitary requirements and the many improvements necessary to repair these

[1] Sanitarian, N. Y., 1888, XX, 1–21.

deficiencies. These findings were confirmed in every respect by the subsequent report of the Quarantine Commissioners themselves and the report of the Health Officer (W. M. Smith). Each year, it seems, the budget of expenses for repairs had been favorably handled by the Legislature but disapproved by the Governor, at an ultimate loss or cost to the State of about two million dollars. The lot of health officers, through this long period, was evidently not a happy one, and several, notably Swinburne and Doty, were removed for political reasons. In 1888, however, a bill for repairs and improvements, including the important addition of a steam-disinfecting plant, was passed and approved by the Governor, and the report of the Health Officer (W. H. Smith) for 1891 indicated a very satisfactory state of affairs.

Two years later (1893), we find the Academy again active, this time in aid of the inevitable trend toward complete control of quarantine by the federal government, in connection with the growing need for wholesale revision of the notion of quarantine itself. As it began to be perceived that location of carriers was more essential than tyrannical detention of the healthy, the original concept (*quaranta giorni*) was fast becoming a misnomer.

The discoveries of Laveran (1880), Koch (steam sterilization 1882, cholera vibrio 1883), Ronald Ross (1897) and Walter Reed (1900) exposed the fallacies of prolonged detention and exploded the older theories of ship disinfection. Up to 1870, the Marine Hospital Service had labored under the burden of many "persons calling themselves physicians," appointed as local personnel for political reasons. Through the survey of Col. J. S. Billings, U. S. Army, who was detailed to the Secretary of the Treasury during 1869–74, to inquire into these conditions, the Marine Hospital Service was taken out of politics and acquired military organization and discipline, merging finally into the present Public Health Service of the nation (1912). The activities of the Academy during 1893–1915 helped to take the New York quarantine service out of politics and to make it a part of national and international sanitation. In connection with various bills for national quarantine successively introduced in Congress in 1892–93, the Committee appointed by the

Academy (1892) to frame and present a suitable bill did not get into action until the eleventh hour, and the bill eventually passed and signed by the President (1893) was somewhat incomplete and unsatisfactory. In connection with the bickerings of the then Health Officer (Jenkins) and the Marine Health Service over the cholera situation of 1893, sessions in the Academy had been stormy and the ultimate fiasco was regarded as a profound humiliation. At this time, the English principle of local isolation and sanitation vs. wholesale detention, was very ably defended by our master sanitarian, W. T. Sedgwick (1893).[2] Subsequent congressional legislation of 1894, 1901, 1902, and 1912 was negligible. In 1913, Dr. E. H. Lewinski-Corwin rendered a valuable report to the Academy, recommending that the New York quarantine station be transferred to the New Public Health Service, created by the act of 1912.[3] The whole situation then acquired a new aspect through the outbreak of the European War. As most of the states had by this time turned over their quarantine stations to the federal service (*e.g.*, Georgia, 1899), the only ports of entry not under federal control in 1914 were Baltimore and New York. On April 10, 1915, under the presidency of Dr. Walter B. James, there was an important Academy meeting,[4] at which the desirability of a turn-over was again stressed and in which ex-President Taft took part. It was urged that the port of New York is the great receiving and distributing station for immigrants and imports, controlled by the federal government in everything but quarantine (now logically a part of the immigration service), that decentralized (state) administration in quarantine or any other branch of sanitation is always bad administration; that quarantine in wartime becomes national and international rather than local, inasmuch as the federal government controls treaties; and that the Army, Navy and Public Health Service had demonstrated their capacity to control sanitation, whether in peace or in war. Our subsequent entry into the war in 1917 virtually placed the New York quarantine station under federal control, through the fact that the extra-cantonment areas of ports of embarkation and debarka-

[2] Sedgwick. Boston M. & S. J., 1893, CXXIX, 193.

[3] Lewinski-Corwin: J. A. M. A., Chicago, 1913, LXI, 194–200.

[4] J. A. M. A., Chicago, 1915, LXIV, 1607.

tion then came under jurisdiction by the Public Health Service. The necessity for such control was further emphasized through the post-bellum period, in which the twentieth century program of internationalization of hygiene grew apace, and meanwhile the official turn-over had already been made in 1916.

F. H. GARRISON

THE FOUNDING AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

D. BRYSON DELAVAN

We have met to-night to commemorate the founding of The New York Academy of Medicine, to trace its history, and to celebrate the approaching consummation of what, three years ago, was pronounced by some to be a dream.

In the light of the past and in the promise of the future, the founding of the Academy was an event of profound significance, one of the most important in the history of American medicine. No time could be more appropriate than this for the contemplation of its past career, its present attainment, and its wonderful promise of development. To me, who have known it for so very many years, has been committed the privilege of recounting the principal events of its early days. This I do not only with deep interest but with genuine reverence, believing that, second only to one other, ours is the most sacred of all professions, and that our Academy more completely represents its lofty spirit and its wide-reaching beneficent influence than does any other medical institution. Indeed, we may well regard it as in very truth a Cathedral, a great Cathedral of the Art of Medicine. When all of its claims to that high distinction are considered, we must feel that the title is well merited, and that in our dealings with our splendid institution the dignity of this phase of its character should be ever kept in mind.

Of those who first conceived the idea of the Academy, and of their followers who have made it what it is, no appreciation can be too intelligent, no praise too great. Far be it that we of the present day should forget the Fathers or carelessly pass